

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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FM AMEMBASSY LOME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7561

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FOR AF/EX BRADFORD AND AF/W AMBASSADOR RAWLS

LAGOS FOR RSO

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ASEC, TO

SUBJ: ASSIGNMENT OF MSG DETACHMENT

REF: A) STATE 76352; B) STATE 249033; C) LOME 77; D) OUAGADOUGOU

44.

COUNTRY TEAM MESSAGE

1. ASSIGNMENT OF MSG DETACHMENT TO LOME IS ONE OF SUBJECTS WE KNOW YOU WILL WANT TO DISCUSS IN WASHINGTON WITH AMBASSADOR RAWLS. FOLLOWING IS COUNTRY TEAM CONSENSUS, ARRIVED AT AFTER DISCUSSION OF REFTEL (A).

2. WE BELIEVE:

A. SECURITY SITUATION IN LOME, IN SPITE OF RECENT PRESENCE IN REGION OF SUSPICIOUS GROUP OF "IRANIANS," IS BASICALLY SAME AS THAT PREVAILING WHEN AMBASSADOR DICINSON RECOMMENDED STRONGLY AGAINST ESTABLISHMENT OF MSG UNIT HERE IN REFTEL (C). COUNTRY TEAM VIEWS REMAIN SAME AS IN THAT MESSAGE;

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B. PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF CONVENTIONAL MSG DETACHMENT WOULD

MAKE NO RPT NO REAL DIFFERENCE IN SECURITY OF AMERICAN PERSONNEL EXCEPT DURING 40 HOURS OUT OF 168 EACH WEEK WHEN THEY ARE MORE OR LESS WITHIN CHANCERY COMPOUND AREA. EVEN SO, HAVING SOLE ARMED MARINE ON DUTY WOULD NOT BE LIKELY PREVENT SUCCESSFUL ASSAULT ON BUILDING BY DETERMINED, ARMED BAND OF TERRORISTS, OR HIGHLY DESTRUCTIVE DETONATION OF LARGE EXPLOSIVE CHARGE IN STREET OUTSIDE EMBASSY (SUCH AS HAPPENED IN SAIGON SEVERAL YEARS AGO);

C. MOST PROBABLE TARGET OF TERRORIST ACTION IN LOME WOULD BE PERSON OF AMBASSADOR; OTHER OFFICERS WOULD BE TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY, IN SOME RELATION TO THEIR RANK AND ACCESSIBILITY. AS AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE AND OFFICERS' RESIDENCES ARE SCATTERED AROUND TOWN, PRESENCE OF MSG DETACHMENT WOULD BE OF NO HELP TO ANY OF THEM IN PREVENTING ASSASSINATION OR KIDNAP ATTEMPT;

D. MOST REASONABLE AND COST EFFECTIVE MEASURE WOULD BE TO PROVIDE AMBASSADOR WITH ARMED PERSONAL BODYGUARD ON ROUND-THE-CLOCK BASIS, A MEASURE WHICH WAS TAKEN BY ISRAELI AMBASSADOR IN LOME IN RECENT PAST. THIS CLEARLY A MATTER FOR AMBASSADOR AND DEPARTMENT TO DISCUSS, WEIGHING SERIOUSLY STRANGE IMPRESSION THIS EXTRAORDINARY PRECAUTION WOULD MAKE ON GOT AND TOGOLESE PEOPLE. NEVERTHELESS, IF DEPT IS AS SERIOUS ABOUT PROVIDING REAL PROTECTION AGAINST MOST PROBABLE TARGET OF TERRORISM AS REFTELS (A) AND (B) CERTAINLY INDICATE, IT SHOULD REPLACE TRADITIONAL MSG DETACHMENT OF BUILDING GUARDS WITH ARMED PERSONAL BODYGUARDS FOR AMBASSADORS (MARINES OR OTHER PERSONNEL, IN OR OUT OF UNIFORM DEPENDING ON LOCAL SITUATION);

E. FOR POST OF THIS SIZE, WHERE PROBABILITY OF TERRORIST ACTION MUST STILL BE RATED AS VERY LOW, WE STILL DO NOT BELIEVE EITHER BODYGUARDS OR MSG DETACHMENT IS NECESSARY, BUT BODYGUARD AT AMBASSADOR'S SIDE MAKES MUCH MORE SENSE THAN STATIC DEFENSE OF PIECE OF RENTED PROPERTY WHICH IS, AFTER ALL, OF MUCH LESS IMPORTANCE;

F. FURTHERMORE, WE ARE TAKING STEPS ALREADY TO IMPROVE THE PHYSICAL SECURITY OF THE CHANCERY COMPOUND AND BUILDINGS, AND THESE STEPS THEMSELVES WILL GO A LONG WAY TO IMPROVE SAFETY OF EMBASSY PERSONNEL FROM HOSTILE ACTS;

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G. MANY OF OBJECTIONS TO HAVING MSG DESCRIBED IN REFTEL (D) ALSO APPLY TO LOME.

3. REFTEL (B) STATED IT WAS DEPARTMENT'S POLICY TO ASSIGN MSG UNIT TO EACH EMBASSY "UNLESS THERE ARE OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS" TO THE CONTRARY. AS REFTEL (C) NOTED, MAJORITY OF LOME CT FELT STRONGLY THERE WERE SUCH CONSIDERATIONS. STATE 76352 APPEARS TO HARDEN POLICY AND NARROW GROUNDS FOR

OBJECTIONS SO AS TO OBLIGE POSTS TO ACCEPT MSG DETACHMENTS, REGARDLESS IF, IN A POST'S OPINION, SUCH DETACHMENT WOULD BE RELATIVELY USELESS AND INEFFECTIVE, SPECIFICALLY AGAINST THREAT FOR WHICH CONGRESS PROVIDED WHAT APPEARS NOW TO BE AN EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES. WE CANNOT STATE UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT HAVING MARINES HERE WOULD DEFINITELY HAVE ADVERSE EFFECTS ON OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS OR INTERESTS IN TOGO. REACTION OF GOT TO REQUEST OF UNPRECEDENTED NATURE COULD RANGE FROM AMUSED TO XENOPHOBIC; PERMISSION FOR PRESENCE OF ARMED DETACHMENT MIGHT WELL BE REFUSED OUT OF HAND, BUT IT IS USELESS TO SPECULATE ABOUT THIS. WHILE SUCH REACTIONS WOULD BE EMBARRASSING, LASTING HARM TO RELATIONS AND INTERESTS PROBABLY WOULD NOT RPT NOT OCCUR. NEVERTHELESS, WE DO NOT AGREE THAT A CONVENTIONAL MSG DETACHMENT FOR LOME IS A PRUDENT MEASURE AGAINST TERRORISM; IT IS A VERY INADEQUATE, COSTLY, CUMBERSOME AND POTENTIALLY EMBARRASSING MEANS TO ATTAIN A WORTHWHILE GOAL.

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